

SOC 100d: Contemporary Society

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Office Hours: MWF 11:15-11:45 AM & 1:45-2:10 PM
TR 10-10:30 AM or by appointment

Harrison Hall 212
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Welcome to Contemporary Society (SOC 100d). This course introduces undergraduate students to the discipline of sociology. Sociology takes society itself as its object of study and analysis. And, as you will see, sociologists have many different ways of studying and analyzing society. Sociologists employ a variety of different theories and perspectives in their studies. Moreover, there is no single aspect of society that all sociologists study. Some sociologists study institutions like the economy, families, sport, media, religion, the criminal justice system, etc. Other sociologists study areas of society like culture, race relations, gender and sexuality, deviance, etc. And some other sociologists will specialize in disciplinary areas like theory, methods, or the history of sociological thought. In doing their analyses, some sociologists look at the big picture, known as “macro analysis,” while others look at inter-personal relations, known as “micro analysis,” and still others mesh the two. There are also a variety of different ways in which sociologists do their research, known as “methods.” Generally, the types of methods used are divided into quantitative analysis that uses statistics or quantitative data and qualitative analysis that uses a variety of different sorts of qualitative data, such as interviewing, field observation, ethnography, or archival research. The readings in this class will introduce you to a variety of the areas of sociological research, methods, and theory.

Here’s the bottom line: we are all members of society and, as such, are experts on the parts of society that intersect with our lives. But how often do most people have either the time or inclination to reflect upon social life itself? How much do most people know about society outside of their range of experiences? Why are some people in our society so wealthy while others starve on the streets? Why do standards of beauty constantly change and clearly favor certain groups? Why do some people sail effortless through school while others struggle just to keep up? What do we even mean by the word “society”? These are some of the questions sociologists ask.

Sociology has a few core areas of study. One of our central concerns is how people form their individual identity or “self” by becoming a member of society. This process of “socialization” presents a paradox: you become an individual only as a group member. This has led to the ongoing thematic of “self and society”. Understanding group dynamics leads sociologists to look at what makes people coalesce into groups. This is important to understand, for instance, how groups express power over individuals and other groups. As a result, sociologists are interested in class and social stratification, gender dynamics, race relations, and other forms of “domination.” In sum, understanding people as members-of-society as well as the order, the patterns, and the power dynamics within society is what sociology is all about.

I hope that by the end of the course you will look at the world you live in through fresh eyes. The ultimate goal of sociology is to question all aspects of our lives – especially those aspects we are most likely to believe are natural and inevitable. Some of what we study may at first seem obvious while

other stuff will may be extremely challenging and provocative. But remember, there is greater complexity in everyday life than might at first appear.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to keep up with the assigned reading, attend lectures, participate in class discussions, and successfully complete the assignments.

Specifications and Policies for Written Assignments

Spacing – double-spaced

Font – Times or Times New Roman 12 point

Ink – black

Paper – white

Margins – 1 to 1.25 inches (sides, top, and bottom)

Citation style – APA or Chicago

Plagiarism – I will vigorously uphold DePauw University’s policy on plagiarism

Email – not accepted for submitting assignments

Late Policy – 10-point deduction 1st day; 3 points everyday thereafter

The following **do not** count as legitimate excuses for late assignments: printer problems, out-of-town guests, travel, other assignments, “I emailed it,” or hangovers.

Course Readings

The textbook is available at Fine Print Bookstore at 6 East Washington St. near the Greencastle Square. In addition to the textbook, there are numerous supplemental readings available on Blackboard under “Course Documents”. The supplemental readings are organized in folders by class meeting and marked on the syllabus with [BB].

Textbook

- Jeffrey Montez de Oca, *Intersections: Readings in Sociology*, Pearson Publishing, 2007. ISBN 0536408297.

Short Analytic Essays

Students are required to write 10 1-page essays on the assigned readings. These essays are due on the day that the reading is assigned and only one essay can be turned in for credit per class meeting. Late essays will not be accepted so get started right away. Essays are graded on a credit/no-credit basis (i.e. no letter grade is assigned). Each essay is worth 2% of your final grade (20% combined).

Your essay should provide a short summary of the assigned reading (your summary should be about 1/3 of your essay). This is followed by your personal response to the reading. A personal response includes the following: 1) Identification of author(s’) argument; 2) Your position vis-à-vis the argument—i.e., do you agree with the argument? 3) Explanation of your position. This is explained on the basis of personal experiences and/or observations. 4) What alternative interpretation and analysis can you provide for what the author(s) claim(s) in the reading?

Exams

There will be three non-cumulative, in-class blue book exams. Each exam will have four short-answer questions that generally focus on vocabulary and two essay questions that require discussion of the assigned readings. The exams will not have any “trick questions” but if you haven’t done the reading

or shown up to class, you will find answering the questions very tricky, indeed. The exams will emphasize what was covered in class but strong responses require students to go beyond class discussions. Each exam is worth 15% of your final grade (45% combined).

Debate and Essay

All students must participate in an in-class debate on an issue of sociological significance. Topics will be determined in-class with student participation during the second week of the semester. Your position in the debate must be turned into an original 5 to 7 page essay that will receive a letter grade. Your essay is due two weeks from the day of the debate. In preparing for the debate and essay, students must do original research that draws on credible sources of evidence (e.g. academic books or journal articles, published newspapers articles, interviews, personal experience, etc.). You should be prepared to defend the credibility of your sources! The debates will be between teams of two students. The essays should conform to standards of college level essay writing. That means no spelling or grammatical errors. (If this is an issue for you, get a competent reader to help you copy edit your writing – don't assume friends, roommates, or siblings are competent.) The debate is worth 10% and the essay 15% of your final grade (45% combined).

Class Participation

Students are expected to come to class prepared to constructively engage in class discussions. This means not only doing the reading but also taking some time to reflect on the reading and forming a position regarding it. Students can also participate outside-of-class by coming to office hours (central to a collegial environment) or through email. Shyness is no excuse for not participating; it simply means you must make extra effort. Class participation is 10% of your final grade.

Since this course will emphasize discussion and many of the topics covered in class may be controversial, I have a few simple ground rules.

- Everyone deserves respect: we all have expertise on society and therefore something meaningful to share.
- All subjects are potentially sociological; therefore, no subject is “off limits” for discussion.
- No ideas or beliefs are sacrosanct. We are free to disagree with and criticize all ideas.
- No one is obligated to tolerate offensive speech and everyone has the right to remove him or herself from a discussion.
- Remember, when debating we criticize ideas, not people!

Grading Scale

All assignments in this class are graded on a one hundred-point scale. There is no curve and I do not assign letter grades until I post the final grades. Your final grade will be determined by a weighted average of all of the assignments – i.e. when the scores on all of your assignments are added together they will come out to some percentage of 100 points.

100-94 = A	89-87 = B+	79-77 = C+	69-67 = D+	59 or below = F
93-90 = A-	86-84 = B	76-74 = C	66-64 = D	
	83-80 = B-	73-70 = C-	63-60 = D-	

Important Dates

<u>Debates</u>	<u>Exams</u>	<u>Cancelled Class</u>
2/14; 3/20; 4/15; 4/22	2/26; 4/1; & 5/12	??

CLASS SCHEDULE

1) Jan. 29 Introduction and Welcome

2) Jan. 31 What is This Thing Called “*The Sociological Imagination*”?

Reading:

- C. Wright Mills, “The Promise,” from the *Sociological Imagination* (1959) [BB]
- Earl Babbie, “Sociology: An Idea Whose Time Has Come” [BB]
- Dan C. Hilliard, “Televised Sport and the (Anti) Sociological Imagination” [BB]

3) Feb. 5 Bureaucratization and Contemporary Society

Reading:

- George Ritzer, “The McDonaldization of Society” [BB]
- Alan Bryman, “The Disneyization of Society” [BB]

Select debate topics and teams

4) Feb. 7 Becoming Your Self by Joining a Group - Socialization

Reading:

- Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, “Socialization: The Internalization of Reality”
- Patricia Yancey Martin and Robert A. Hummer, “Fraternities and Rape on Campus”

5) Feb. 12 Social Interaction and Gendered Performances of Self

Reading:

- Helene M. Lawson, “‘Attacking Nicely’: Car Saleswomen Adapt to an Incompatible Role”
- David A. Snow, Cheryl Robinson and Patricia L. McCall, “‘Cooling Out’ Men in Singles Bars and Nightclubs: Observations on the Interpersonal Survival Strategies of Women in Public Places”

6) Feb. 14 Quantitative Approaches to Sociological Analysis

Reading:

- Gary A. Sailes, “An Investigation of Campus Stereotypes: The Myth of Black Athletic Superiority and the Dumb Jock Stereotype”

Debate Questions Due

7) Feb. 19 Qualitative Approaches to Sociological Analysis

Reading:

- Alice Fothergill, “The Stigma of Charity: Gender, Class and Disaster Assistance” [BB]

8) Feb. 21 Visual Sociology

Reading:

- Douglas Harper, “Visualizing Structure: Reading Surfaces of Social Life” [BB]

9) Feb. 26 First Midterm Examination

10) Feb. 28 Classical Sociological Approaches to Culture

Reading:

- Howard S. Becker, “Culture: A Sociological View”
- Theodore Caplow, “Rule Enforcement Without Visible Means: Christmas Gift Giving in Middletown” [BB]

11) March 4 Popular Culture Meets Sub-Culture

Reading:

- Kamy Cunningham, “Barbie Doll Culture and the American Waistland”
- Eva Liddel, “Paris Hilton Doesn't Do Dishes: How Barbie Stood Up to Allen Ginsberg” [BB]
- Margo DeMello, “‘Not Just For Bikers Anymore’: Popular Representations of American Tattooing” [BB]

12) March 6 Classics on Control, Domination, and Authority

Reading:

- Stanley Milgram, “Behavioral Study of Obedience”
- Philip G. Zimbardo, “Pathology of Imprisonment”

13) Mar. 11 “Somebody’s Watching Me” – Contemporary Surveillance and Control

Reading:

- Gary T. Marx, “Soft Surveillance: Mandatory Voluntarism and the Collection of Personal Data” [BB]

14) Mar. 13 How the Wealthy Keep their Wealth – Social Stratification

Reading:

- Peter W. Cookson, Jr. and Caroline Hodges Persell, “Preparing for Power: Prep Schools and Higher Education”
- Susan Rosenthal, “Sick and Sicker: Two Models of Health Care Rationing” [BB]

15) Mar. 18 Living in Poverty

Reading:

- Katherine Newman and Chauncy Lennon, “The Job Ghetto”
- Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, “Making Ends Meet On a Welfare Check”

16) Mar. 20 In Class Debates (papers due April 3)

17) Mar. 25 Spring Break

18) Mar. 27 Spring Break

19) Apr. 1 Second Midterm Examination

20) Apr. 3 Label Me “Deviant”

Reading:

- William J. Chambliss, “The Saints and The Roughnecks”
- Elaine M. Blinde and Diane E. Taub, “Women Athletes as Falsely Accused Deviants: Managing the Lesbian Stigma” [BB]

21) Apr. 8 Impolite Conversation – Talking Race

Reading:

- Bob Blauner, “Talking Past Each Other: Black and White Languages of Race”
- Joe R. Feagin and Hernan Vera, “White Racism: A Sociology of Human Waste”

22) Apr. 10 Racial-Ethnic Identity in Consumer Culture

Reading:

- D. Stanley Eitzen, “Names, Logos, Mascots, and Flags: The Contradictory Uses of Sports Symbols” [BB]
- Marilyn Halter, “Shopping for Identity: The Marketing of Ethnicity”

23) Apr. 15 In Class Debates (papers due April 29)

24) Apr. 17 Meet Your Meat: A Social Problem?!

Reading:

- Schlosser, Eric, “The Most Dangerous Job” [BB]
- Schlosser, Eric, “What’s in the Meat” [BB]

Franken, Al, “Vast Lagoons of Pig Feces: The Bush Environmental Record” [BB]

25) Apr. 22 In Class Debates (papers due May 6)

26) Apr. 24 TBA

27) Apr. 29 The Social Construction of Gender

Reading:

- Judith Lorber, “‘Night to His Day’: The Social Construction of Gender” [BB]
- Sherryl Kleinman, “Why Sexist Language Matters” [BB]

28) May 1 Looking at Masculinities – What Does it Mean to Act *Like* a Man?

Reading:

- Tommi Avicoli, “He Defies You Still: The Memoirs of a Sissy”
- Jackson Katz and Sut Jhally, “The National Conversation in the Wake of Littleton is Missing the Mark” [BB]
- Jeremy Seabrook, “It's What You Do: Most of the Men Who Have Sex with Men in the South Probably Don't Identity Themselves as ‘Gay’ or ‘Bisexual’” [BB]

29) May 6 Family Forms and Intimate Relationships

Reading:

- Stephanie Coontz, “The way we weren't: The myth and reality of the "traditional" family” [BB]
- Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung, “Men Who Do and Men Who Don't”
- Mary Riege Laner and Nicole A. Ventrone “Egalitarian daters/traditional dates” [BB]

30) May 8 Education – An Appropriate Way to the End the Course!

Reading:

- Jonathan Kozol, “Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools”
- Annette Lareau, “Social Class Differences in Family-School Relationships: The Importance of Cultural Capital”

Final – Monday May 12 from 1 to 4 PM.